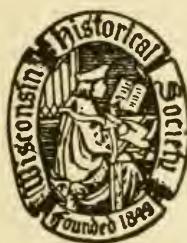


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## A CRITIC AND A CERTIFICATE " OF CHARACTER



Wisconsin State historical society  
September 1919

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# 190



## A CRITIC AND A CERTIFICATE OF CHARACTER

In the June issue of the MAGAZINE was noted the joint legislative investigation of the conduct of the Historical Society, comment thereon being reserved until the committee should have completed its hearings and made its report. That report was made to the legislature on June 12, and the time is ripe to afford the members of the Society an account of the committee's findings and of the circumstances responsible for the investigation. Any public institution is a fair mark for criticism and, particularly if it be of a constructive character, such criticism may be of much good to the institution at which it is aimed. Whether the criticism to which the Historical Society has recently been subject has been of a constructive character we leave to the discrimination of our readers to determine. In so far as practicable we present the story through the medium of original documents, but to the understanding of these a short introduction is essential.

In the autumn of 1916 Mr. Publius V. Lawson of Menasha, a member of the Society and long a patron of the Historical Library, requested the loan of certain volumes which the rules of the library prohibited sending away from the building. Displeased with this, Mr. Lawson indicated his intention of carrying the matter to the state legislature. Thus began a persistent campaign of criticism of the Society which has now continued for two and a half years. Repeated hearings have been had before legislative committees, a widespread solicitation of state officials and private citizens has been conducted, the matter of Mr. Lawson's complaints has been before the curators of the Society on numerous occasions, and widespread publicity has been accorded them by

the press of the state. The failure to convince any of the many committees which passed upon his complaints that they possessed validity or merit, however, has not operated in any way to decrease Mr. Lawson's zeal in prosecuting them. Meanwhile, a mass of misinformation was gradually being disseminated over the state, which in the long run must prove harmful to the Society. At the recent session of the legislature two bills were introduced, fathered by Mr. Lawson, which those responsible for the administration of the Society believed would affect injuriously its interests. Accordingly the legislature was invited to make a thorough investigation of the Society's affairs, with a view to determining authoritatively the matters at issue. The invitation was acceded to, and in May and June a committee composed of Senators Roethe and Pullen and Representatives S. R. Webster, Hineman, and Roethel conducted exhaustive hearings, taking several hundred pages of testimony. Mr. Lawson appeared before the committee in the capacity of complainant and was afforded unlimited opportunity to present his case and to adduce evidence in support of it. He stated that the only complaint "which I have ever made is that certain books in the library which are now withheld from loaning over the state of Wisconsin should be loaned, and the other complaint is the anti-Wisconsin attitude of the Society in its publications."<sup>1</sup>

In actual practice, however, the investigation took a wide range, embracing almost every aspect of the many-sided activities of the Society. The findings of the joint committee not only completely reject the contentions of Mr. Lawson but they constitute a striking testimonial to the character of the work of the Society and its usefulness to the commonwealth. The complaints of Mr. Lawson are declared to have been inspired by "misguided zeal," and to be "entirely unwarranted and unjustified." In the matter of publications

<sup>1</sup> Stenographic record of joint committee hearing, 7.

the committee testifies its belief that the Society should possess "broad discretionary powers"; it recognizes the fact that the history of Wisconsin cannot be made separate and distinct from other history; to limit the Society's publications to events that transpired within the present state boundaries would be, the committee declares, "illogical and undesirable"; and it finds that no publications have been issued which were not "entirely warranted."

The finding with respect to the loan of books from the library is, if possible, even more sweeping. Quite contrary to the complaint that the Society has not pursued a sufficiently liberal loaning policy, "it has, if anything, pursued a policy the committee would characterize as too liberal." The library "from its very nature is not, was not intended to be, and cannot be construed to be a circulating library." Accordingly a bill was recommended (and subsequently passed by the legislature) defining the loaning policy of the library and expressly prohibiting in future the loan of works on genealogy, newspaper files, and all rare or expensive books, maps, charts, or other material which in case of loss could not readily be replaced.

The concluding testimonial of the report, standing as the voluntary tribute of a group of impartial judges, should afford genuine gratification to every friend of the Society and should increase the satisfaction of every member over his connection with it: "The committee finds the affairs of the Society, financially and in every other respect, most excellently managed, with a staff, members of which have been with the Society for a score of years or more and whose work to them has become more a labor of love for the institution and its success than for the pecuniary remuneration they receive \* \* \* The committee does not hesitate to say that every member thereof was not only profoundly impressed but actually amazed to find it such a big, comprehensive, serviceable, and helpful institution in which the state may

take intense pride, and the committee hopes that every citizen of the state may find opportunity to visit the library and see from a personal inspection what a wonderful institution Wisconsin possesses in its State Historical Society."

Notwithstanding this sweeping approval of the management of the Society Mr. Lawson finds in the report a complete vindication of his criticisms. In a letter supplied to many leading papers of the state he assures the public that "the only two contentions made in the complaint of the conduct of the Historical Society were sustained by the legislative investigating committee." Members of the Society who take the trouble to compare this letter of Mr. Lawson with the committee report upon which it is based will thereby forewarn themselves against undue disturbance over future criticisms of the Society which may emanate from the same source. We subjoin the documents which are most pertinent to an understanding of the entire subject.

#### DOCUMENTS

##### No. 1: PETITION TO THE LEGISLATURE OF 1917<sup>2</sup>

MENASHA, Wis., Jan. 27, 1917.

MY DEAR MR. HART:

I am writing you about a subject we are interested in as long time citizens of Wisconsin, that is its historical records.

The Historical Society of Wisconsin has singularly failed of its purpose. It has been appropriated millions of dollars by the state, and while it never has done much in writing up the history of the state, it has in the last three years given up state history entirely and published numerous works on the history of Virginia, the Ohio river region, and Lewis and Clark expedition up the Missouri River. It has in preparation other works on the same subject, and in addition proposes to add books on the Gold Seekers of California and numerous works on Kentucky, Virginia, and Pittsburg.

<sup>2</sup>This was sent as a letter to Assemblyman Hart, who offered it as a petition to the Assembly. The copy given here is taken from the Madison *Democrat* of January 30, 1917.

The publication of its foreign material has cost in labor of preparation, proof reading, printing and binding about \$20,000 annually, and in meantime Wisconsin history is sidetracked and abandoned. The legislature never intended this use of its money and this foreign matter publication is all illegal and not wanted by anyone.

Names of some of these books of foreign matter that in no way concerns our state history are:

Preston and Virginia, dated 1916

Frontier Along Ohio, dated 1916

Lewis and Ordway (up Missouri) 1915

Also as to uses of the library of the State Historical Library. The building cost the state \$770,000 and the library about \$5,000,000. Heretofore the books have been loaned to people all over the state, the borrower paying the expenses of course. That was the purpose of the library and the reason of the support given by the legislature.

Now by an order just passed by the advisory committee, the loaning of books outside of the building is discontinued. Hereafter books will not be loaned. That order reduces the library to a mere city library of Madison and cuts out all use of the library unless upstate people can take the time to visit the building at Madison, as books cannot be taken from the building. The Superintendent (who is not a Wisconsin man and not acquainted with the purpose of the Society) declares he proposes to make the library purely a reference library, same as the library of Congress.

As it may be difficult and possibly unwise to defeat any appropriation for the State Historical Society it could be cut down.

Also, there should be a proviso attached to its appropriation reading like this:

"Provided the said Society shall loan in any part of the state at the expense of the borrower for transportation, any of its volumes for a reasonable time, not to exceed two weeks.

Also said Society shall not use any of said funds in the preparation or editing or publication of any works, either bound or unbound, except such as pertain to the history of Wisconsin.

Also no such funds shall be used for the expenses of the annual address unless the same concerns the history of Wisconsin.

Also no part of said funds may be expended to promote historical enterprise other than such as concern the history of Wisconsin."

Yours truly,

PUBLIUS V. LAWSON

[To ASSEMBLYMAN HART]

NO. 2: REJOINDER TO MR. LAWSON'S PETITION

HON. CHARLES F. HART,  
State Capitol,  
City.

MY DEAR SIR:

For your information and that of other members of the legislature I beg leave to direct your attention to a highly erroneous statement concerning the State Historical Society which was offered by you to the Assembly in the form of a petition on January 29. If deemed proper, I respectfully request that this communication may be placed before the legislature in the same way as the petition referred to.

In general your petitioner asserts that during the last three years (which happens to be the period of my administration of the Society) a marked change in the ideals and policies of the Society has taken place, as a result of which its interests have become entirely divorced from the subject of state history and its funds are being spent illegally on "foreign" projects; furthermore, that from being a library whose collections are loaned freely all over the state the executive board of the Society has recently prohibited the loan of all books, thus reducing it to the status of a Madison city library. In particular, numerous detailed statements are made designed to illustrate these general propositions.

With respect to this petition I regret to say that while not every one of your petitioner's detailed assertions is erroneous, most of them are, and that the net effect of the petition is totally misleading. In venturing to call your attention to these errors my purpose will be merely to show you that the Society's policy today (in the points complained of) is identical with that pursued under the administrations of my two predecessors, Draper and Thwaites.

With respect to the Society's publications it has never been the practice to confine their contents wholly within the geographical boundary of the state. The first volume ever published by the Society (in 1855) contains at least one article on the Revolution in the West. From this first volume down to the latest issue more or less material has been published pertaining to things outside the geographical boundary of the state. It will probably be conceded by any sane man that the Society could hardly do otherwise if it publishes at all. For example, how can we deal with the history of the Swiss settlement without saying something about Switzerland? Or how can we deal with the history of the Civil War without noticing some of the things which happened to Wisconsin's soldiers after they crossed the state boundary? Evidently it becomes a matter of judgment to what extent the publications of the Society shall be exclusively local and to what extent they shall take a wider range. In my own judgment (and the best scholarly opinion of the country can be cited to support me) discussions of such themes as the Revolution in the West, the Lewis and Clark expedition, and of proper indexes of the Society's own collection of manuscripts are unquestionably proper subjects to which to devote the Society's activities.

Turning to the question of the supposed illegality of the work complained of, I desire to call your attention to the fact that the Society's charter granted by the legislature in 1853 authorizes it to "ordain and enforce a constitution, by-laws, rules, and regulations," not inconsistent with the constitutions and statutes of the United States and the state of Wisconsin: and that article 1, section 1, of the Society's own constitution adopted in 1897 in pursuance of this authorization sets forth as the object of the Society "the collection, preservation, exhibition, and publication of materials for the study of history, especially the history of this state and of the Middle West; to this end, \* \* \* publishing and otherwise diffusing information relative to the history of the region, and in general encouraging and developing within this state the study of history." Without being a lawyer I am under the impression that the foregoing is conclusive with respect to the question of legality. Whether conclusive or not it is clear that the practice which you have been informed is illegal is of over sixty years' duration and that the three secretaries of the

Society, Draper, Thwaites, and myself, as well as the numerous state officials who have in the past disbursed state funds in this connection are alike responsible for the practice.

Turning to the matter of the loan of books from the library the practice today stands on the same basis as it has always stood so far as the sources of information at my command disclose. The library has always been regarded as primarily a reference library. Along with this books have been circulated to such an extent as might be possible, having in view the general character of the library and the extension of the greatest service to the greatest number of users. There are certain classes of books which are not loaned away from the building either because of their rarity or value, or because of the consideration that the greater interest of the public is served by retaining them for use within it. There is nothing new about this policy. It is true that changing conditions and demands from time to time must be met by corresponding changes in the application of the general policy laid down. The executive committee has passed no order to my knowledge prohibiting the loan of books from the library, and there has not been a day since my administration began that books have not been out on loan. On January 29, the day you introduced your petitioner's communication, some fifty of our volumes were scattered over the state and about one hundred thirty more were in the hands of teachers and students of the University, state officials, and others here at the capital.

The reasonable limits to which this communication may extend will not permit me to note and refute all of the errors of detail contained in your petitioner's communication. I request, therefore, that my omission to note any given assertion shall not be construed as acquiescing in its accuracy.

You have been informed that in the last three years the Society has given up state history entirely. I merely note by way of comment that at the present time the state printer has in course of publication two volumes, one devoted wholly to state history (*An Economic History of Wisconsin during the Civil War Decade*) and the other chiefly to the history of the state; and further that there has not been a single instant during the three years of my administration during which one or more works on the history of the state has not been under preparation.

You have been told that the cost of this "foreign" work is about \$20,000 annually. For the reason that the work is inextricably bound up in the general administration of the Society it is not possible for me to give a precise statement of the sums spent annually on that portion complained of. It is perfectly safe to say, however, that it does not exceed one-fifth the amount you have been informed. The detailed information upon which this estimate is based will cheerfully be placed at your disposal if you care to take the time to go into it.

You are informed that the library building cost the state \$770,000 and the library itself about \$5,000,000. I do not perceive that this information is at all germane to the subject under discussion, yet I advert to it by way of illustrating the carelessness of your petitioner's statements. The cost of the library building, it is true, was \$770,000. There is no way of ascertaining at the present day the cost of the library through the sixty years of its existence. Since 1901, however, the appropriation for the purchase of books and similar material has totalled about \$97,000. During the Civil War period nothing whatever was being spent. For the whole period from 1854-1901 it seems probable that the average expenditure did not equal or exceed one-third the amount appropriated since 1901. Assuming, however, an annual average expenditure of \$6,000 for the entire sixty-three year period the total amount would be something less than \$400,000 instead of the \$5,000,000 you have been informed.

With respect to the advice which your petitioner gives the legislature as to the conditions which it should attach to the Society's appropriation, it may be said that in part matters of judgment only are involved. Of the wisdom of the petitioner's judgment I submit this single illustration: It is complained that the annual address in the last three years has not concerned the history of Wisconsin. The titles of the three addresses in question (the last two of which only am I personally responsible for) have been: The Treaty of Ghent—and After; The President of the United States; and Abraham Lincoln as War Statesman. Concerning the first it may be noted that both British and American armies operated in Wisconsin during the War of 1812 and that the very address complained of recounts the strenuous efforts of the British negotiators of the treaty to make

Wisconsin along with the Northwest a great Indian barrier state. With respect to the second and third I venture to observe that the president of the United States is also the president of the citizens of Wisconsin and that Abraham Lincoln was war statesman for Wisconsin as well as for the rest of the country; in short, that all three of these subjects were eminently proper for the State Historical Society of Wisconsin to listen to; and that whether proper or improper they differ in no material respect from the addresses of preceding years when the administration of the Society was in other hands than my own.

In conclusion, permit me to remind you that in the Historical Library the state possesses one of the great reference libraries of the country, recognized as such far and wide by scholars. It is not questioned that the legislature has the right either to destroy it or to revolutionize it at its option. The measures aimed at by your petitioner amount not to a reform, but to a revolution. On every proper occasion I have urged members of the legislature to visit the library and acquaint themselves with its operation. I desire to improve the present opportunity to extend this invitation to you personally and through you to every member of the present state legislature. Until you shall thus acquaint yourself with our work I respectfully suggest that it would be inadvisable on the strength of mere unfounded assertions either to revolutionize or to ruin the state's greatest library.

Very truly yours,

[Signed] M. M. QUAIFE

February 1, 1917.

### No. 3: FORWARD WISCONSIN<sup>3</sup>

By Publius V. Lawson, LL. B.

In reports of the Superintendent of the State Historical Society he says:

"It may readily be conceded that established society in Wisconsin is still too *immature*."

<sup>3</sup>This document, thus entitled by the author, was sent in broadcast fashion to public officials and private citizens of the state during the autumn and winter of 1918-19.

"That the citizens of Wisconsin have never individually come to the support of their historical society."

"A large portion of the citizens of Wisconsin are uninformed concerning its work, and even unaware of its existence."

The entire state has just passed through a period of reply to slander of our good name from outside, and the author of that quoted all the state delegations, and other papers concerning contested education, political science, welfare laws, statesmanship, invention, mechanics, manufacture, agriculture, dairying, bred cattle, bred seeds, and medical science. In seventy years of statehood it has advanced the world most in comfort, progress and human rights of any similar commonwealth. Nothing immature about that.

As to the support of the Society: The state has built for it a beautiful marble building costing \$770,000, donated something over a million dollars for its library, and much more than a million for maintenance of the Society. During the five years past the state has donated about \$350,000 for maintenance, out of which the one who wrote the above libel on our people has taken about \$20,000. In bequests the Society have received \$114,000 during its existence. The above is a complete answer to nonsupport by our state individually and collectively.

As to the admission that the Society has not met with its expected success, and therefore the people of the state are "not aware of its existence," is unfortunately too true. The reason is obvious. The reason is its one man factor, whose work is scattered, schemeless, with no logical or natural order or design to promote the history of Wisconsin, but ranges over a rummage field, from an insult to the Pope of Rome to a "reprint" on "ginseng plant," two centuries out of date. It may interest loyal admirers of our state to look over the slack scattered and useless efforts of the Society and therein will be found the reason why the Society gets nowhere. It is to be found in its kind of publications. An annotated list of the motley disassociated subjects with a territorial range of the whole union is given below.

The purpose of founding the Society was to promote the history of Wisconsin and not to exploit the gold diggers of California, or reprint a two century old French work on ginseng, or exploit a news

article making insulting reference to the Pope. Draper in numerous addresses told how the Society was to glorify the state. Judge Baensch, its president, said four years ago, "the plan of the Society contemplates it be the people's society."

The charter of the Society limits its right to publish in these words, "to diffuse and publish information relating to the description and history of the state"—Chapter 17, Laws 1853. This right has never been changed or modified and stands the governing law of the Society today. The Society has not now and never had any right to employ its staff in editing foreign works not pertaining to the history of our state, or to publish them at expense of its tax-payers. To do so is a criminal misuse of the funds of the Society. The legislature has made the Society generous donations assuming it would conform to its foundation law and exploit the marvelous story of our state. No one ever expected it to waste its time and rich inheritance as promised by the Superintendent, "to include every important aspect of the historical field," for which "no single lifetime will suffice." To include this world history the name of its published works is changed from the well-known "collections" to "publications," and error of law, morals, and judgment that has been vigorously practiced, while work on Wisconsin history he reports as "indefinite and remote." Thus our state on the waiting list is forgotten.

The Society should have at its head one who is for our state, who loves its story and traditions. The reputation, glory, and wonderful achievements of the great pioneers of art, letters, science, and mechanics who have made our state the grandest of all commonwealths should not be left to *uninformed* strangers to record their glorious works.

*A list of illegal miscellany and misfit literature produced by the Society:*

"*Removing the Papacy to Chicago*"—a ribald jest, uncalled for, and exposing the entire schemeless fritter of present activities of the Society. Moreover the article is copied from the Chicago press without credit. It should be repudiated.

Proposed volume on *Ginseng*—a reprint of a French work of 1716, on ginseng, two centuries old. Fortunately this work of translation has been held back by the war.

*Captain Pryor*—8 pages—an officer in Lewis and Clark Expedition.

*"Dream of Northwest Conspiracy"*—40 pages—relates to the Civil War conspiracy of Vallandigham.

*Journal of Journey Detroit to Miamitown, Indiana in 1790.* 52 pages proceedings.

Proposed to publish “one or more volumes on California *Gold Seekers*” having procured several diaries for this purpose and advertises for more.

*Journal of Lewis and Ordway* up the Missouri River to the Pacific—a volume of 444 pages, which critics say contained nothing new as all had been published before. Cost state about \$5,000. Five members of the staff labored on it for six months.

Proposed work on *Kentucky History* has employed the time of the staff for four years. Recently the Superintendent exults in getting \$2,000 from Kentucky to help pay for assistance on the work. Thus calmly making of Wisconsin a print shop to edit, print, publish, and bind the history of Kentucky.

*"Chicago's First Lawsuit"*—a slave case tried in Louisiana—15 pages.

*"McKay's Journal"*—of journey on upper Missouri River, 24 pages, of which the Superintendent says, “It is not expected that it will prove interesting.”

Reproduction of all files of *Missouri Newspapers* down to 1825.

*"The Frontier a World Problem"* in which the name of our state does not occur.

*A Constitutional Series* “will run to several volumes.” This is the special travail of the Superintendent, “unmature” in state history and unlearned in the law—unsuspecting that “brevity is the soul of wit.”

*Magazine of History*, should be of “Wisconsin History.”

*“Frontier advance on Upper Ohio”* contains old letters of the Revolutionary war near Pittsburgh, of which four volumes have been issued costing the state about \$20,000, and employed the best talent in the Society who could work wonders for our state history if permitted to do so. Two volumes more of the work is promised at the expense of Wisconsin and its history.

The *Farmer Bottomley* papers in a volume costing several thousand dollars, which was an "enterprise to which the personal attention of the Superintendent" was given, best exhibits his conception of the glorious achievements of the people of this state and why he regards them as "immature."

The *Preston Virginia* papers—a volume calendar, which the Superintendent says "is as interesting as a tax list," cost the state about \$5,000. The report says: "It is expected before its termination this series will include a considerable number of volumes."

The *Annual Address* for the last five years has been made by an outsider on a subject not connected with the state.

The superintendent and staff are employed most of the time on six periodicals not connected with the Society, but edited, proof read and carried on at its expense and in its offices. These are:

(1) The proof reading and work due to editing the volumes brought out by the *Lakeside Press* of Chicago. State does not print the work as yet.

(2) "*The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*"—a quarterly edited, and all work done by the staff. The state has not as yet been asked to print it, but the Society pays \$200 to aid the work.

(3) "In like fashion it assists in making possible the publication of "*Writings on American History*."

(4) "It has donated the labor, by no means light, of editing the "*Proceedings of the Mississippi Valley Historical Society*."

(5) *Development of Chicago*—a volume edited and proof read by the staff, but state not yet asked to print.

All the information of this paper is found in reports of the Society for 1914-15-16-17.

The publication of this inappropriate material has been justified by the Superintendent by reference to the work of his predecessor, Dr. Thwaites. But the reference is an injustice. The Sons of the American Revolution paid for the three volumes of the events of the Revolution on the Upper Ohio, and Dr. Thwaites never supposed the Society was authorized to carry on publication of foreign history.

NO. 4: REPORT OF THE SPECIAL JOINT COMMITTEE OF THE LEGISLATURE TO INVESTIGATE THE AFFAIRS AND MANAGEMENT OF THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY<sup>4</sup>

The special joint committee of the legislature appointed under joint resolution No. 48, S. to make an investigation of the management and affairs of the State Historical Society and report to the legislature, submit the following report:

The committee had exhaustive hearings on the affairs of the State Historical Society, especially as relating to complaints made by Honorable P. V. Lawson, and while admitting Mr. Lawson's deep devotion to the Society and as having only its best interests at heart, in the judgment of the committee a misguided zeal led him to make complaints that the committee finds were entirely unwarranted and unjustified.

In the opinion of the committee the Society should have broad discretionary powers in the matter of publications that it issues, and while these publications should relate primarily, of course, to the history of our own state, the committee recognizes the fact that this history cannot be made separate and distinct from other history, especially the history of the great West, of which Wisconsin was originally an integral part; and to limit historical publications to events that transpired within the present state boundaries appears illogical and undesirable. This matter should, the committee believes, be left entirely to the discretion and good judgment of the Society. The committee finds that the Society has issued no publications that were not entirely warranted.

In regard to loaning books from the library the committee believes that the Society, quite contrary to the complaint made that it has not been responsive enough in complying with requests for the loan of books and other material from the library, has if anything pursued a policy the committee would characterize as too liberal. The State Historical Library from its very nature is not, was not intended to be, and cannot be construed to be a circulating library. Many of its books are rare volumes that could not be replaced at all or only at great expense and it would seem preposterous to allow

<sup>4</sup> Reprinted from the Senate Journal for June 12, 1919.

these to be sent broadcast over the state. The committee is of the firm opinion that the State Historical Library was intended to be a reference library and all acts of the legislature and the wording of the charter, constitution, and by-laws of the Society seem to bear out that assertion. The rooms of the Society are open at all times to the public to secure any desired information and the committee finds that it is not even necessary for persons living outside of the capital city to come to Madison to secure the information they want but that it will be furnished on written application by the Society, the staff of which the committee finds is ready at all times to make the most thorough research of its collections to obtain and supply the information desired. The courtesy and accommodation of the staff in such inquiries for information could not be more commendable. To find books and volumes necessary for research work by parties who come to the reference library missing therefrom because they have been sent out to other points in the state would be in the opinion of the committee an ill-advised state of affairs. The practice of loaning out books has been it seems merely one established by custom. The committee recognizes the fact that there may be books, pamphlets, and other material not of intrinsic value and not of a rare nature that can with propriety be loaned out on request without detriment to the interests of the Society as an accommodation to the public, and the authority to make such loans might wisely be possessed by the Society to be exercised in its discretion and judgment subject to such rules and restrictions as may be adopted by the Society.

In the absence of statutory provisions on this subject the committee introduces and recommends for passage the following bill in order that there may be no more controversy over the loaning of books by the Society.

**A BILL**

To create subsection (8) of section 44.02 of the statutes, relating to the State Historical Society.

The people of the state of Wisconsin, represented in senate and assembly, do enact as follows:

**SECTION 1.** A new subsection is added to section 44.02 of the statutes to read: (44.02) (8). To loan, in its discretion, for such periods and under such rules and restrictions as it may adopt, to libraries, educational institutions, and other organizations, or to private individuals in good standing, such books, pamphlets, or other materials that if lost or destroyed could easily and without much expense be replaced; but no work on genealogy, newspaper file, or book, map, chart, document, manuscript, pamphlet, or other material whatsoever of a rare nature shall be permitted to be sent out from the library under any circumstances.

**SECTION 2.** This act shall take effect upon passage and publication.

The committee also recommends for indefinite postponement bill No. 51, S., re-referred to this committee from the committee on state affairs.

The committee finds the affairs of the Society financially and in every other respect most excellently managed, with a staff, members of which have been with the Society for a score of years or more, and whose work to them has become more a labor of love for the institution and its success than for the pecuniary remuneration they receive. This is highly gratifying in view of the high standing and reputation the Society, which was founded in 1853, has obtained all over the nation. Housed in one of the finest buildings of the state, with a floor space of three acres, in which are deposited over 200,000 invaluable historical volumes and documents, constituting the third and perhaps second largest historical library in the United States and one of the largest in the world, it has become a repository of reference material that is consulted for important information not only by every class of activity in our own state but often in the nation. The committee does not hesitate to say that every member thereof was not only profoundly impressed but actually amazed to find it such a big, comprehensive, serviceable, and helpful institution in which the state may take intense pride and the committee hopes that every citizen of the state may find opportunity to visit the library and see from a personal inspection what a wonderful institution Wisconsin possesses in its State Historical Society.

A complete record of the proceedings at the hearings held by the committee is attached herewith to be filed as a part of this report.

SENATOR H. E. ROETHE, (Chairman)

SENATOR A. J. PULLEN

ASSEMBLYMAN S. R. WEBSTER

ASSEMBLYMAN M. L. HINEMAN

ASSEMBLYMAN HERMAN ROETHEL

**No. 5: MR. LAWSON'S COMMENT ON THE REPORT OF THE JOINT  
LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE<sup>5</sup>**

"The press notice sent out from Madison entitled 'Historical Society Given Clean Slate,' was incorrect, not true, and misleading. The Historical Society is housed by the state in a granite and marble building costing \$770,000. The state has appropriated some \$6,000,000 for equipment and maintenance in the last seventy years, and this year \$63,500. For five years past most of the publications have been books on Kentucky, Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Lewis and Ordway up the Missouri River, all of it thirty to seventy-five years before Wisconsin was a territory. Promised works were several volumes on the gold diggers of California, and translation of a work on ginseng from Paris, 200 years old. Because of such gross neglect of Wisconsin history the legislature investigated the Society.

"In its findings the committee was careful to refer to the great collections of the Society and administer rebuke without injuring the Society, in which it was wise. Of its publications the report says: 'The publications should relate primarily, of course, to the history of our state, the committee recognizes the fact that this history cannot be made separate and distinct from other history, especially the history of the West of which Wisconsin was originally an integral part.' This finding was exactly in accordance with the complaint made in which it was shown the anti-Wisconsin attitude of the Society had in late years almost entirely ignored state history.

"Another complaint was the refusal of the Society in last four years to loan genealogies outside of the building, for the sole reason someone may call at the library to consult the book while it is loaned up state. It was maintained by complainant that the people up state

<sup>5</sup> Reprinted from Milwaukee *Journal*, July 2, 1919.

who paid for the books by taxation have as much right to the loan of the books as the one who called at the library. And the expense of going to Madison to consult the books was prohibitive. The investigating committee entirely agreed with this view, and proposed a bill compelling the loan of all books except those 'of a rare nature.'

"Thus the only two contentions made in the complaint of the conduct of the Historical Society were sustained by the legislative investigating committee."





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